



AUSTRALASIAN INSTITUTE  
OF MARINE SURVEYORS

# Shipshape

December 2025



**Bulk carrier safety, efficiency  
reshaped by new rules, tools**

**YEAR'S END A TIME TO REFLECT**

# A day in the life of a marine surveyor

WHEN I was asked to write an article describing a day in my life as a marine surveyor, I could not pick a specific typical day, as our working days are usually very diverse.

We predominantly do domestic commercial vessel (DCV) surveys, which on a day can be periodical, shaft and out of water surveys, attending afloat or docked at a shipyard.

In Cairns, this will involve driving to the ship berth or shipyard and working through the AMSA survey forms and other inspections onboard with the master and crew or maintenance contractors.

During dockings, setting out scope of works, from survey findings for various contractors, can be a significant part of the time spent at the vessel.

If the survey is in, say, Townsville, then four hours of driving time and hotel accommodation is also required. Darwin, Torres Straits, Weipa also require travel time, flights and accommodation as part of the survey day or days.

Often DCV new-builds are being built nowadays in Asian shipyards and we have several that build DCVs for Australia. The required overseas travel is often a life experience in itself.

These surveys are done at key milestones of construction, with sea trials and commissioning survey at the last overseas trip prior to coming to Australia. I find these surveys rewarding, given my background in ship construction and repair, as you follow a ship from a stack of steel or aluminium through to sailing on her for sea trials.

Every system and component



is checked during these surveys, so the ships become quite familiar in detail as the survey process and build progresses. Plan familiarisation, liaising with builders and designers, research and desktop assessments also form part of these new build surveys. Of course, the AMSA form and report-writing is ongoing.

On the shipping side, we do on hires, bunkers, insurance and hold cleanliness surveys. Being based in Cairns and as the sugar crushing export season is in full swing, there are hold cleanliness surveys to do on each visiting bulk carrier prior to loading. Mostly done in Mourilyan port which is one-and-a-half hours' drive from Cairns and we are required to attend on berthing.

Times can be unsociable hours, as opposed to DCV surveys, as other cargo surveyors will know from standing on a wharf waiting for the gangway to be deployed in the middle of the night. After boarding and discussing survey plan with the chief officer, getting hold hatches open and then a brisk cardio workout up and down five holds on a Handymax bulk carrier.

On passing holds, it is back to the ships office and produce the required reports before

disembarking and driving back home. Marine order 32 surveys are also often done on visiting bulk carriers, as these are required at the first port in Australia. Often this is Cairns, as bulk fertiliser materials are discharged in several ports along the Queensland coast from one ship.

Insurance report, either condition / valuation reports for insurers or damage surveys in the case of claims, are in our capabilities. These can be commercial ships or recreational ships.

I have noticed a couple of insurance companies now specifying condition reports to be done by an AIMS member surveyor, following the AIMS initiative in this sector.

Recreational ships can be challenging for survey, as the owners are not professional seafarers and often have little understanding of maintenance, critical safety systems, and what constitutes a safe and seaworthy vessel. I believe in educating people during the survey, as we find defects is a role we should shoulder as a marine surveyor.

This helps the owners and crew to understand why a particular defect in a component or system is unsafe. Often, when explained why, most people accept the logic, and we all have practical examples of when things go wrong and why.

To end, while not a "typical day" article, I hope to give an insight into what a day may look like in our marine survey company for myself or our other marine surveyor.

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